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Dear

It's been almost 50 years ago that you first participated in what has since become known as the pioneering Mills Longitudinal Study of Women's Adult Development. We are now writing with very exciting news: The Retirement Research Foundation has awarded us a new research grant to recontact you and the other women in the Mills Longitudinal Study! Our mission is to find out how your life has been during the period from age 60 to 70. This time of life was long known as a time of "getting old" and, for men, retirement. But the age norms and expectations for both women and men have changed considerably in recent years, and it is of great interest to psychologists, policy makers, and the general public to understand how people live and structure their time during this period. You and your fellow Mills women are one of the first cohorts to experience and negotiate these changes—with subsequent generations watching and following your lead.

Thus, the Research Retirement Foundation decided it was important to tap your expertise and ask you to share with us your experiences and perspectives of this past decade of your life, with a particular emphasis on the great diversity in how people devise their own unique version of life at this time. In turn, we are going to write reports of what we find, both general trends and unique solutions, which we will then present to influence both researchers and policy makers, hoping to make them more aware of the needs and issues that people over 60 nowadays face.

We are enclosing an initial questionnaire that asks about the major events in your life over the past 10 years and invites you to tell us your story in your own words, as well as some basic background information and your suggestions for things we should include in our forthcoming age-70 follow-up.

Very few lives have no pain, so we cannot expect that this undertaking will be entirely pleasant. We do hope that it will bring you insights and a broader perspective on your life and your loved ones. A stamped and self-addressed envelope is enclosed. If you prefer to complete these materials via e-mail, just contact us at Mills2007@berkeley.edu and we will e-mail you the materials to complete on your computer. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us by e-mail there, or phone us at 510-643-2966.

Please try to return the materials within a month, that is, by July 15, 2007. Remember that, as always, the information you send to us will be held in strict privacy; as you will notice, all the questionnaires include just a code number, with no names or identifying information included. Please make sure to read and sign one copy of the consent form; then return that signed form along with your completed questionnaire. You may keep the other copy of the consent form for your records.

We will then send you a follow-up package that we are currently developing, tailored more specifically to core issues that you and the other Mills women consider important to your life situation. We are pleased to report that we will be able to pay you, as a token of our appreciation, $100 for completing the follow-up questionnaires.

A brief update about us: Such a long study of lives cannot be done by a single individual. After directing the Mills Study for more than 40 years, Ravenna Helson retired in 2002 and handed over the day-to-day responsibilities to her long-time colleague and collaborator, Oliver John. But some academics never fully retire and so, fortunately for us at the Mills Study, Ravenna has continued to be involved and remains central to this 50-year follow-up.

We want to thank you again for contributing your experiences and reflections to this study of woman's lives. Your willingness to examine and share your life experiences over the years has enabled us to address many key questions about the ways women change and develop during adulthood. There are no other studies that span so much of women's adult life—with your continued help and commitment, it will be 50 years. Our findings appear in many textbooks, journals, and magazines. They have made important contributions to the understanding of women's lives and of the ways personality grows and changes throughout adulthood. We are very grateful to you for your participation in this important and long-lasting endeavor.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Oliver P. John
Professor

Ravenna Helson
Adjunct Professor Emerita